MCGILL DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
COURSE OUTLINE

GEOG 503 ADVANCED TOPICS IN HEALTH GEOGRAPHY Fall 2019

Instructor: Professor Mylene Riva and Professor Nancy Ross

Class Meeting Times: Friday 11:35-14:25

Location: Burnside Hall, room 308

Contact information: Prof. Riva, Burnside Hall, room 419; mylene.riva@mcgill.ca
Prof. Ross, Burnside Hall, room 420; nancy.ross@mcgill.ca

Office Hours: Prof Riva: Fridays 14:30-15:15, or by appointment
Prof. Ross: Fridays 14:30-15:00, or by appointment

Readings: A list of readings is attached. Readings are available electronically through MyCourses.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a critical review of advanced topics in health geography, including perspectives on environmental and social determinants of health and chronic disease. Seminars will focus on critical appraisal of conceptual and methodological approaches in health geography research. Students will develop independent project topics throughout the course, and have the opportunity to focus on selected themes in health geography.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:
1. Identify and describe dominants paradigms and conceptual approaches in health geography.
2. Critically appraise literature in the health and geographic sciences.
3. Evaluate alternative methodological approaches to health geography research.
4. Facilitate seminar discussions on selected health geography themes.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD

There will be one 3-hour seminar every Friday. Seminars will include both instructor-led and student-led group discussion. Students are expected to complete readings and prepare to participate actively during all class discussions.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal for systematic review</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final presentation of review paper</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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**Thematic presentations:** In teams of 2, students will present and facilitate a review of a selected paper for one of the course themes (Weeks 5 through 9). Students will be expected to identify an empirical paper appropriate to the week’s topic, provide it to the instructor to post for class-wide reading, present a summary and critical appraisal of the research, and facilitate discussion.

**Proposal for Systematic Review:** Students will propose a systematic review on a topic that is related to social and/or spatial determinants of health. The proposal should be about 3 pages in length and communicate the need for a systematic review of a particular body of work. The proposal should include: search strategy, a description of criteria for inclusion/exclusion of studies, and an estimate of the number of studies to be included in the review.

- Two to three research question/topics for the systematic review to be submitted by email to Profs. Riva and Ross no later than Thursday September 19th, 4pm.
- The proposal is due Friday, October 18th, 2019.

**Final paper:** Students will prepare a systematic review of the literature (5,000-word maximum) on a topic related to their research interests. This review should incorporate principles of systematic review learned in class and incorporate realist philosophy and critical appraisal. The aim is to produce a publishable quality paper that will also inform the student’s research. Students will present their reviews to the class in the final course sessions.

- The papers are due one week after the last class, on Friday, December 6, 2019 by 5pm. Please submit two hard copies of the paper – one for each of Prof. Riva and Prof. Ross.

**Final presentation of review paper:** Students will prepare a short presentation of their systematic review paper, including a summary of the background, review objectives, methodology, key findings, and implications of their work.

**Participation:** Class participation is a requirement of the course. Quality of contribution is preferred over quantity. Overall class preparation and participation as well as performance in student-led discussion will be assessed for the participation grade. Class participation will be evaluated based on evidence that students have read assigned readings and prepared for class, and regular, thoughtful contribution to weekly discussions.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the Handbook on Student Rights and Responsibilities, Charter of Students’ Right (online at [http://www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/greenbookenglish.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/greenbookenglish.pdf)).

**Academic Integrity:** McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/student/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/student/srr/honest) for more information).

**Language of Submission:** In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

**Student assessment:** For information on university and department policies for student assessment, please go to [http://www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment](http://www.mcgill.ca/geography/studentassessment)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>NR/MR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sept 6</td>
<td>First meeting: introductions, student-led discussion about their research interests, course expectations, review of the syllabus</td>
<td>NR + MR</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td>An introduction: Health geography, epidemiology, population level perspectives</td>
<td>NR + MR</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sept 20</td>
<td>Critical appraisal of health literature systematic review – theory</td>
<td>MR + NR</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sept 27</td>
<td>Pragmatics of systematic review - getting a handle on the health literature – Class meets in Humanities and Social Sciences Library’s eClassroom, Main floor of the Humanities and Social Sciences Library, aka the McLennan Library Building.</td>
<td>Library Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>Social gradient in health</td>
<td>NR + students</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 11</td>
<td>Natural experiments and Population health intervention research</td>
<td>MR + students</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>Neighborhoods and health</td>
<td>NR + MR + students</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>Housing and health</td>
<td>MR + students</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>Built environment and chronic disease</td>
<td>NR + students</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Student paper presentations</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 15</td>
<td>Student paper presentations</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 22</td>
<td>Student paper presentations</td>
<td>ALL</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>Course conclusions</td>
<td>NR + MR</td>
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An Introduction to Health Geography, Epidemiology, Population Level Perspectives

- Scan the latest issue of the scientific journals Health and Place and Social Science and Medicine

Critical Appraisal

- Greenhalgh T. How to read a paper: getting your bearings (deciding what the paper is about). BMJ, 1997; 315: 243-246.
- Greenhalgh T. How to read a paper: Papers that summarize other papers (systematic reviews and meta-analysis). BMJ, 1997;315: 672-75.
- Paper that we will appraise together:

Systematic Review


  - Example of a published systematic reviews from GEOG 503:

Social Gradient in Health

- Phelan JC, Link BG, Tehranifar P. Social conditions as fundamental causes of health


**Natural Experiment and Population Health Intervention Research**


**Examples of Natural Experiments:**


**Neighbourhoods and Health**


**Housing**

- Riva, M., Fletcher, C., Perreault, K., Dufresne, P. Relocating to a new or preexisting social housing unit: significant health improvements for Inuit adults. Canadian Journal of Public Health.
- Perreault, K., Dufresne, P., Riva, M., Fletcher, C. Overcrowding and sense of home in the Canadian Arctic. Housing Studies. DOI: 10.1080%2F02673037.2019.1602720.

**Built Environment and Chronic Disease**

- Kolb H, Martin S. Environmental/lifestyle factors in the pathogenesis and prevention of